

China fights new clusters as US death toll soars

AFP, Peking

China sealed off two cities and imposed travel restrictions on 18 million people yesterday in an effort to eliminate fresh coronavirus clusters, as the United States reported a record number of deaths from the disease.

Authorities in the two cities south of Beijing cut transport links and instituted mass testing after 127 infections were recorded in the region over the past week.

They joined Australia's third-largest city in taking an ultra-cautious approach to the pandemic, with Brisbane announcing a lockdown over a single infection.

The responses to the relatively small outbreaks contrasted sharply with the chaos surrounding runaway infection figures in many other parts of the world.

The United States reported a daily record on Thursday with nearly 4,000 deaths, while the toll in Brazil hit 200,000.

Many countries in east Asia however have managed to deal with outbreaks more effectively, and China yesterday moved to contain its largest cluster in six months with its usual tight restrictions.

The northern cities of Shijiazhuang and Xingtai, home to more than five million people, were effectively sealed off.

Long-distance passenger vehicle transport in both cities was suspended as of yesterday, and highways were closed. Flights to and from Shijiazhuang were cancelled, and trains suspended.

Orders to remain in their local areas were placed on everyone in Shijiazhuang and Xingtai, as well as surrounding regions.



The lockdown in Brisbane comes a day after Japan announced a month-long state of emergency to deal with its latest surge in infections, sowing doubt about the viability of the Tokyo Olympics this summer.

Around the world, there are few signs of the virus abating, with nearly 1.9 million people known to have died worldwide and 87 million confirmed cases.

Travellers arriving in England and Scotland will soon be required to show negative coronavirus tests, officials said yesterday, as they try to curb the spread of new strains.

The UK government had previously argued against the requirement, which has already been introduced in other countries, saying quarantining of those arriving from high-risk countries was more effective.

Now international travellers arriving in England will be required to present a negative Covid-19 test taken within the last 72 hours, the Department of Transport said.

The measures, which also apply to British nationals, will come into effect from early next week. Passengers who do not comply with the regulations face a £500 (\$678, €552) fine.



A woman skis in an apple orchard at the Kolomenskoye Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site, in Moscow, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

NYT: Trump has discussed pardoning himself

REUTERS, Washington

US President Donald Trump has said he is considering pardoning himself in discussions with aides since the November election, the New York Times reported. The newspaper cited two unidentified people with knowledge of the discussions.

"In several conversations since Election Day, Mr. Trump has told advisers that he is considering giving himself a pardon and, in other instances, asked whether he should and what the effect would be on him legally and politically," the Times reported.

The newspaper said it was not clear whether he had discussed the matter since the storming of the US Capitol by his supporters on Wednesday.

Riot exposes racial inequality too

REUTERS, Washington

The United States' stark racial inequality was on display after a mob of predominantly white supporters of President Donald Trump stormed the US Capitol with ease on Wednesday then left with few immediate consequences, according to Washington residents, activists and politicians, including President-elect Joe Biden.

The rioters broke through barricades, smashed windows, snatched souvenirs and entered Congressional offices and chambers, some taking photographs with police. Some carried trophies with them as they walked out.

Police officers in charge of security held off using tear gas until intruders had reached the heart of the building, where they roamed freely, ransacking offices.

US media reported that some law enforcement officials even opened doors for them.

The lack of security and limited police response, despite weeks of promotion of the pro-Trump protest that sparked the riot, was in sharp contrast to the largely peaceful Black Lives Matter protests in Washington six months ago.

"My mom said if you did this you'd be shot," Beatrice Mando, who works for the district and attended BLM protests last year. "She is right. There would be hundreds dead, if not more, had this group been Black."

In a speech on Thursday, Biden agreed there was a sharp contrast.

"No one can tell me that if it had been a group of Black Lives Matter protesting yesterday, they wouldn't have been treated very, very differently from the mob of thugs that stormed the Capitol," he said.

The United States saw a summer of widespread



demonstrations against racial injustice that began in May following the killing of George Floyd, a Black man who died as a Minneapolis police officer knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes.

In Washington, participants in those protests said their reception was very different.

"There were cops at every intersection in DC. There were cops at all the monuments, at the Capitol, in front of the White House," said Abby Conejo, 29, who works at a small business in Washington.

The Black Lives Matter protesters in Washington had been faced with rows of masked National Guard troops at the Lincoln Memorial in June, as Trump

vowed to crack down on what he called lawlessness by "hoodlums" and "thugs."

One evening, baton-swinging police fired smoke canisters, flashbang grenades and rubber bullets to drive peaceful protesters away from the White House, so that Trump could walk to a nearby church and be photographed holding a Bible.

"They treated us like the enemy," Conejo said. "Where was that anger and rage yesterday? Why were these people treated like friends?"

Local residents said they worried that the police response was so muted there may be a repeat.

Charles Allen, a DC council member who represents the area, said he and his neighbors are used to First Amendment demonstrations and large gatherings.

"That was not what this was. This was an insurrection. This was domestic terrorists coming into our city and trying to overtake the Capitol," Allen said, adding it was traumatic for the neighborhood.

"I think that people will feel emboldened that they can do this and I think on top of it, they feel emboldened because they left with souvenirs," he said.

Among the mob who stormed the Capitol were individuals who waved Confederate flags and wore clothing carrying insignia and slogans espousing white supremacist beliefs.

"It felt like abuse to see not just white privilege but white supremacy in action," said Makia Green, a Black Lives Matter organizer in Washington. "To see the bias from the government, from the police."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Nuke deal: Iran won't rush for US's return

Iran is in no hurry to see the US return to a 2015 nuclear deal with major powers after Joe Biden takes office this month, its supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said yesterday. "We are in no rush and we are not insisting on their return. Our demand, which is both logical and rational, is the lifting of sanctions" that outgoing US President Donald Trump reimposed after quitting the deal in 2018. "If the sanctions are lifted, the return of the Americans makes sense." Since 2019, Iran has gradually suspended implementation of most of its key obligations under the nuclear deal.

Republican Loeffler admits defeat in Georgia Senate race

Republican Kelly Loeffler on Thursday conceded her closely watched Senate race in Georgia, with Democratic wins in the state's two runoff elections sealing the party's control of the chamber later this month. "Earlier today I called Reverend Warnock to congratulate him and to wish him well in serving this great state," the businesswoman said in a video message. Loeffler, who will serve out the remainder of her term, had planned to object in Congress on Wednesday to the certification of Joe Biden's November 3 victory. But after the violence that day at the Capitol, which was overrun by mobs of supporters of Trump, the senator changed her mind, saying she could not oppose certification "in good conscience."

Indonesia frees cleric linked to Bali bombing



A radical cleric linked to the Bali nightclub bombings was freed from prison yesterday, stirring grief and anger among victims nearly two decades after more than 200 people, mostly foreign tourists, were killed in Indonesia's worst terror attack. Abu Bakar Bashir, 82, is seen as the spiritual leader of Islamist terror network Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), which was responsible for the massive blasts that ripped through a pair of packed bars in October 2002. The preacher was released after completing an unrelated jail term for helping fund militant training. Bashir had been previously jailed over the Bali bombings, but that conviction was quashed on appeal.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



Police detain a member of the Hindu nationalist and right-wing federation of cattle protection Bhartiya Gau Raksha Dal shouting slogans for the protection of cows and demanding cows to be declared national animal during a protest in Hyderabad, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

FARMERS' PROTEST IN INDIA

Talks fail to break deadlock

REUTERS, New Delhi

The Indian government and representatives of protesting farmers failed to reach an agreement on contentious new agriculture laws yesterday and said they will meet again in a week's time.

Tens of thousands of farmers have been camped on the outskirts of the capital New Delhi for over a month, calling for the repeal of laws introduced by the federal government, which says the legislation is aimed at modernising the country's antiquated agricultural sector.

Farm leaders say the laws are an attempt to erode a longstanding minimum support price for their produce and want a full repeal of the laws.

"The government has constantly said that if the unions give any other option besides repeal, then the government will consider them," agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar told reporters after the eighth round of talks between the two sides.

"But despite long discussions, no options were

presented today, and that's why the discussions have ended here."

The two sides will meet again on Jan. 15, he said. "There was a heated discussion. We said we don't want anything other than repeal of (the) laws," Hannan Mollah, one of the farm leaders told reporters. "We won't go to any court, this (repeal) will either be done or we'll continue to fight."

Mollah added that the protesters would proceed with a rally during India's Republic Day celebration on Jan. 26 if their demands have still not been met.

The majority of India's farmers sell their produce largely to small retailers at a much lower price than the government guaranteed price - offered to only a fraction of farmers.

They fear that with the introduction of the new laws, big retailers like Reliance Industries will enter the market to buy their produce at a lower price, while the government may slowly dismantle the current system of procurement at the guaranteed price.

Identical twins not so identical!

AFP, Paris

Genetic differences between identical twins can begin very early in embryonic development, according to a study Thursday that researchers said has implications for how these siblings help scientists tease out the effects of nature versus nurture.

Identical -- or monozygotic -- twins come from a single fertilised egg that splits in two.

They are important research subjects because they are thought to have minimal genetic differences.

This means that when physical or behavioural differences emerge, environmental factors are presumed to be the likely cause.

But the new research, published in the journal Nature Genetics, suggests that the role of genetic factors in shaping these differences has been underestimated.

Kari Stefansson, head of Iceland's deCODE genetics, and his team sequenced the genomes of 387 pairs of identical twins and their parents, spouses and children in order to track genetic mutations.

They measured mutations that occur during embryonic growth and found that identical twins differ by an average of 5.2 early developmental mutations.

In 15 percent of twins, the number of diverging mutations is higher.

When a mutation happens in the first few weeks of embryonic development, it would be expected to be widespread both in an individual's cells and in those of their offspring.

জীবনের জন্য বিজ্ঞান
"শেখ হাসিনার দর্শন, সব মানুষের উন্নয়ন"

"বিসিএসআইআর ঢাকা ও চট্টগ্রাম কেন্দ্রে নিরাপদ ও স্বাস্থ্যকর গুটকী মাছ প্রক্রিয়াকরণ এবং ইনডোর ফার্মিং গবেষণা সংক্রান্ত সুবিধাদি স্থাপন" শীর্ষক প্রকল্প, বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তি মন্ত্রণালয়

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ই-দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

Tender ID	Name of work	Tender closing & opening date and time
528707	Construction of Civil, Electrical and related works steel shade 20200 square feet, Steel super structure building 4 storied-22500 square feet (approximate).	08-Feb-2021 15:00

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GD-42

Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh
Office of the Superintending Engineer
E/M Circle, Kurmitola, Dhaka-1229

File No. 30.31.2600.413.03.016.17/45 Date: 06/01/2021

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>). Package information is available in tender notice under e-GP System Portal.

This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branches. Detailed Name of Work, Tender ID and Closing Date & Time are as follows.

SI No.	Name of work	Tender ID	Opening and closing date & time
1	Providing installation testing & commissioning of Sub-station equipment incl. other related E/M works for Irshal Colony Askona at HSA.	524539	27-Jan-2021 12:00

Further information and guidelines is available in the e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk.

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জিডি-৪৫

Md. Jakaria Hossain
Superintending Engineer (E/M)(C.C.)
E/M Circle, CAAB, Dhaka